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“If you want to figure out how to get more women into the game of golf and keep them there you should ask one particular group: women.”

MARK WOODWARD, *Contributing Editor*

Shouldn't ladies lead the way to golf growth?

Women have played a role in golf dating back to the 16th century when Mary, Queen of Scots, and one of the first recorded golfers commissioned the construction of the first golf course at St. Andrews, Scotland. According to some history books she was also one of the first to coin the word caddie. It then took a long, long time before the first recorded women's golf tournament happened and even longer for the first women's golf association to be formed. It seems rather odd to me that women played such a big role in the foundation of golf yet it isn't translating into a strong presence within the game today.

The cover story of this issue is on ways to get more women involved in the game today and therefore helping grow the game. I was talking to a female colleague in the golf industry and she caused me to look at the entire subject of women and golf a little differently in the matter of a few short minutes.

If you look at the history of the golf industry, in general, there are very few women in high-level positions. Granted there are a lot of women in our industry but they're not in positions of authority. Whether we want to admit it or not, the golf industry in the United States is still a “men's

club” in this regard. Sorry, but it's the truth.

My point is, if you want to figure out how to get more women into the game of golf and keep them there you should ask one particular group: **WOMEN**. You need to find out what they want out of the game, what makes them happy to come to the golf course on a regular basis, what you need to do to make them feel wanted, how to reduce the intimidation factor and most importantly how to make the game of golf fun for them — like the National Women's Golf Al-

liance is doing (see page 16.) And even more important, we need to encourage women to be in positions of authority and take a leading role in the decision making process about the future of our game. In my opinion women in power positions will bring more women into the game. And my colleague brought up a great point: “Where there are more women, there are more men!”

I remember several years ago I was involved in the National Institute for Golf Management, a golf management institute held in Wheeling, West Virginia at Oglebay Resort. When I first

got on the Board of Regents, it was all men. The best move we made in the 18 years I was part of the institute was to get women on the Board of Regents. They brought such a different perspective to our discussions and let's face it; in many cases they are just flat-out smarter than us guys. This move alone changed the dynamic of the board and we instantly got better at everything we did.

As mentioned, for hundreds of years there have been women in golf. In fact, all the way back to the very beginning of this great game, yet here we are today still trying to figure out the solution to a very important issue in our industry. After all, if you look at the past census for the U.S. there are more women in the U.S. than men. In some years there are as many as 6 million more women than men.

It makes sense that if we as an industry could capture just a small percentage of these women and turn them into golfers, the industry would grow substantially. After all, women are responsible for 80-percent of consumer buying decisions in the U.S., according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

So, there you go. Another article with a man writing about how to get more women into the game of golf. Excuse me while I go ask my wife why she doesn't play golf.

Mark Woodward is a senior vice president for OB Sports, principal of DaMarCo Golf, president of Mark Woodward and Associates and a contributing editor for *Golfdom*.

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“I was like the fourth outfielder on a baseball team who plays when a starter needs a day off — not going to kill you but probably not going to win you any games, either.”

MATT NEFF, *assistant superintendent, Wedgewood G&CC, Powell, Ohio*

Speaking from experience

After receiving my turf degree, I was hired as the 2nd assistant at the club at which I had interned. Shortly after I was hired, the 1st assistant left for another job and I was promoted, a decision my boss undoubtedly questioned a few times during that first year. ¶ Despite my glaring lack of experience, I was sure I would immediately be awesome. I didn't do too bad that first year, but I assure you, I fell quite short of awesomeness. I was like the fourth outfielder on a baseball team who plays when a starter needs a day off — not going to kill you but probably not going to win you any games, either.

No one wants to hear a preachy assistant dispensing career tips so hopefully this doesn't sound that way. But I've made plenty of mistakes, had many successes and have worked with and for several great people. As a result, I've learned a few things that might be beneficial to you newer guys. If you're interested, here's my unsolicited advice:

Communication is key. Effective communication with your boss and the crew is essential. You need to have a firm understanding of your boss's expectations and preferences in order to effectively manage the crew. Furthermore, providing ac-

curate information to your boss regarding course conditions, crew performance, daily plans, etc. is crucial in not only efficiently managing the course but also in gaining your boss's trust.

Get to know the crew. You can't manage what you don't know. Taking the time to get to know the staff not only lets them know that you value them but will also help you to learn their strengths and weaknesses and, ultimately, how to get the best out of them.

Don't get tunnel vision. When you were on the crew, your main responsibility was completing your assigned job and moving on to the next

thing. Now, you have to not only focus on the tasks you are personally trying to accomplish in a given day, you also need to be keeping an eye on the crew and planning what everybody's doing next and what they need to do tomorrow, the next day and next week.

Listen to the crew. If you're new to the course, don't be afraid to ask them what the standard procedure is for a certain task. Even if you've been there a while, listen to their ideas. Asking for their input shows that you respect them and will give them a sense of ownership, which often leads to happier, more productive employees.

Know when not to listen to the crew. Sometimes the crew can be more concerned with minimizing effort than satisfactory results. Working smarter not harder, as the saying goes, is fine as long as the smart way yields the same or better results as the hard way.

No job is beneath you. Bathrooms need cleaned and there's no one to do it? Grab a toilet brush, my friend. Just because you're a manager doesn't mean you're above doing dirty work. Plus you didn't take Theory and Practice of Porcelain Stain Removal in turf school just to delegate that task to the hungover kid who was an hour late that day, did you?

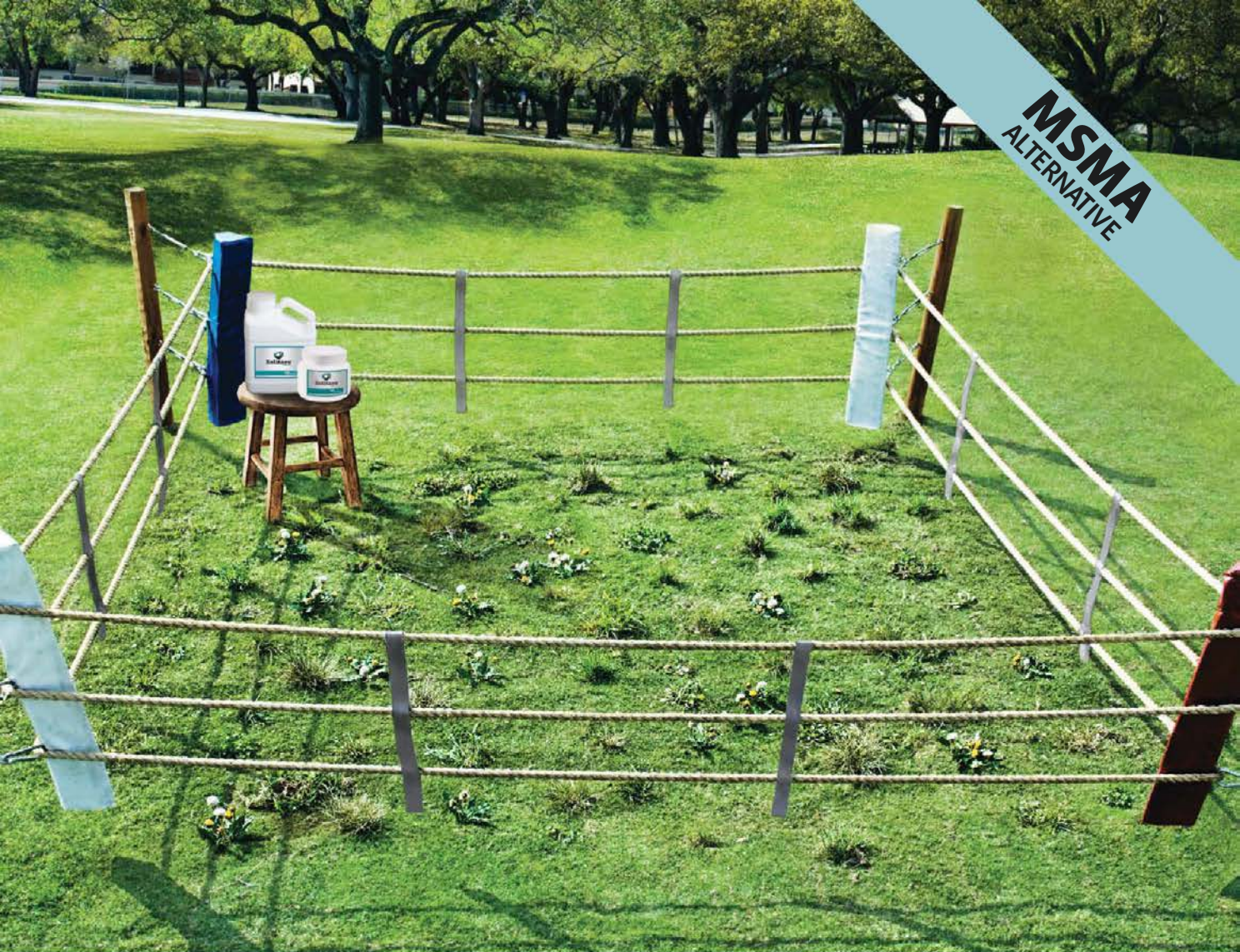
Make a decision. Develop the knowledge and confidence to make decisions on your own without calling the boss on the radio every 10 minutes. There are still times when you should consult with him first, but you need to be able to differentiate those situations from those you can handle on your own.

You'll probably feel overwhelmed at times when you're first starting out, but once you establish a routine and start getting a better feel for your boss's expectations, the crew and the course things will get easier. In the meantime, there's going to be days when you just need to grind it out.

Just remember, there are plenty of fourth outfielders who went on to become All-Stars.

Matt Neff (mneff4@yahoo.com) is assistant superintendent at Wedgewood G&CC in Powell, Ohio.

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5 KEYS to PICKING UP WOMEN

By STACIE ZINN ROBERTS

Want to score with the ladies? These 5 tips from the NWGA are a must. (We're talking about rounds played, by the way.)




Two years ago, while attending the International Network of Golf conference at Innisbrook resort in Palm Harbor, Fla., Debbie Waitkus, president of Golf For Cause, was sitting through a presentation on the USGA's then brand new Tee It Forward campaign. ¶ As the speaker rolled out the program that touted the benefits of moving forward in the tee box complex as golfers age, she looked through the materials, studying page by page, and noticed a glaring omission: Women had been entirely left out.

"So here we were at the ING conference. Jan Bel Jan (ASGCA, Jan Bel Jan Golf Course Design), Pam Swensen (CEO, Executive Women's Golf Association) and I are kicking each other under the table," Waitkus says. The group turned to one another and agreed, "We need to come together."

A movement was born. A year later, the National Women's Golf Alliance was a reality.

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According to the NWGA, new women golfers spend, on average, \$2,000 per year at golf facilities on greens fees, lessons and food and beverage.

NWGA
National Women's Golf Alliance



ATTRACTING WOMEN

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The organization was formed to offer club managers, pros and superintendents strategies on how to make their courses more attractive to women who may be daily fee players or potential club members. The group's mission is to increase the overall health and economic viability of the game by increasing the number of women playing golf and to improve engagement levels of existing women golfers.



Debbie Waitkus

NWGA's process

The NWGA visits golf courses and facilities and rates them for women-friendliness. The association developed a base of standards and best practices to help make golf facilities more welcoming and acces-

sible to women in an effort to enhance golf's overall appeal to women.

A team of secret shoppers visits a course and plays a round of golf, spends time in the clubhouse and takes note of the experience. To date, more than two-dozen golf courses and facilities have been evaluated on the NWGA's five core criteria: playability, customer service, golf course amenities, facility amenities and golf programs.

The playability criteria focuses on the needs of the average female golfer. "If there are multiple sets of tees, at least one set must be under 5,000 yards, and the forward tees should all be maintained to the same standard as all the other tees," Bel Jan says. "We look for carries, sharp dog



Jan Bel Jan

legs, just a number of things architecturally that would help make a golf course strategically appealing but not penal to a variety of women players.

"The idea is to make the game accessible, not easy," Bel Jan says.

"Women don't slow down the game because they're out looking for golf balls. They're generally in the fairway, just not hitting it as far. That's why this criteria is so important. It's about playability, not for the superb player, but for the bogey player or the bogey-plus player to engage in the game," she adds. "If you can get on in regulation then you could have a terrific handicap, just playing from the proper yardage. And that's what we're looking for, to give women the chance to throw their hands up and make a birdie or eagle with regularity, not just five times a season."

Service and amenities

For the customer service criteria, NWGA evaluators pay attention to how women are treated at the facility, such as if they are welcomed and thanked for their patronage, if tee times are readily available to women and if there are any women in key staff positions.

"At one course we did an evaluation, one of the gals who does outside service handed me a card that gave me a free drink at the bar," Waitkus says. "I could have had a bad round but they said, 'We're so glad you came out today.' That was my last touch point and I walked away with a good feeling."

According to the criteria, on-course amenities such as ball washers and drinking water stations should be conveniently located to the forward tees and placed in areas that are safe to access. Clean restrooms on the course are considered important, as well.

Facility amenities should also be appealing to women. Offering healthful food, not just burgers and brats, and a selection of women's apparel and equipment in the pro shop, reflects positively toward certification. Women-specific golf

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THE 5 KEY CRITERIA EVALUATED FOR NWGA CERTIFICATION

Golf Course Playability Multiple sets of tees for women that are all maintained to the same standards as all other tees, including a minimum of one set rated for women under 5,000 yards for par 72 courses.

Customer Service Women welcomed as valued customers as shown by fair access to tee times, staff is welcoming to guests, and women in key staff positions

Golf Course Amenities On course amenities (drinking water, ball washers) are safely and conveniently located at all possible teeing areas along with clean restrooms available at appropriate intervals on the course and in the facility.

Facility Amenities Measurable selection of women's merchandise in the Golf Shop and healthful food and beverage choices.

Golf Programs Women-specific learning and playing experiences available and fairly priced 9-hole and/or other play options.

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ATTRACTING WOMEN

Continued from page 18

programs, such as ladies-only events and instruction, are a big plus as well.

Scorecard

After the NWGA visit, a detailed report is delivered to club management. The report doesn't just point out flaws and areas that need improvement, Bel Jan says, it also "sees all of the things they are doing right and applauds the good news."

Two to six months after the initial site visit, the NWGA visits again, playing a round of golf and completing a follow-up report. It records any changes based on the prior report's recommendations or improvements according to the established criteria.

Golf facilities must achieve an 80 percent score in at least three of the core

criteria to be deemed certified by the NWGA. Facilities are certified for three years. Courses can enter the certification program for a fee of \$500 per year and two rounds of golf for a foursome to conduct the evaluation, Bel Jan says.

Moreover, some of the recommended changes don't cost a thing. "Teaching staff to say thank you doesn't cost a cent," Waitkus says. Other changes, such as constructing additional tee boxes, may take more time and require some expenditures, Bel Jan adds.

Rounds played

The overall goal is to help golf facilities increase their numbers of women golfers. For facilities needing additional help, the NWGA offers consulting, staff training and course design, among other services.

Innisbrook, (the place where the seed for the NWGA was planted), has undergone the process and displays the NWGA Rolling Out the Green Carpet certification logo on its website.

"We are very impressed with the wealth of information and depth of the NWGA's course evaluations. The report was extremely comprehensive and provided valuable insight on how we can better serve women golfers, especially in addressing how to improve golf course playability," says



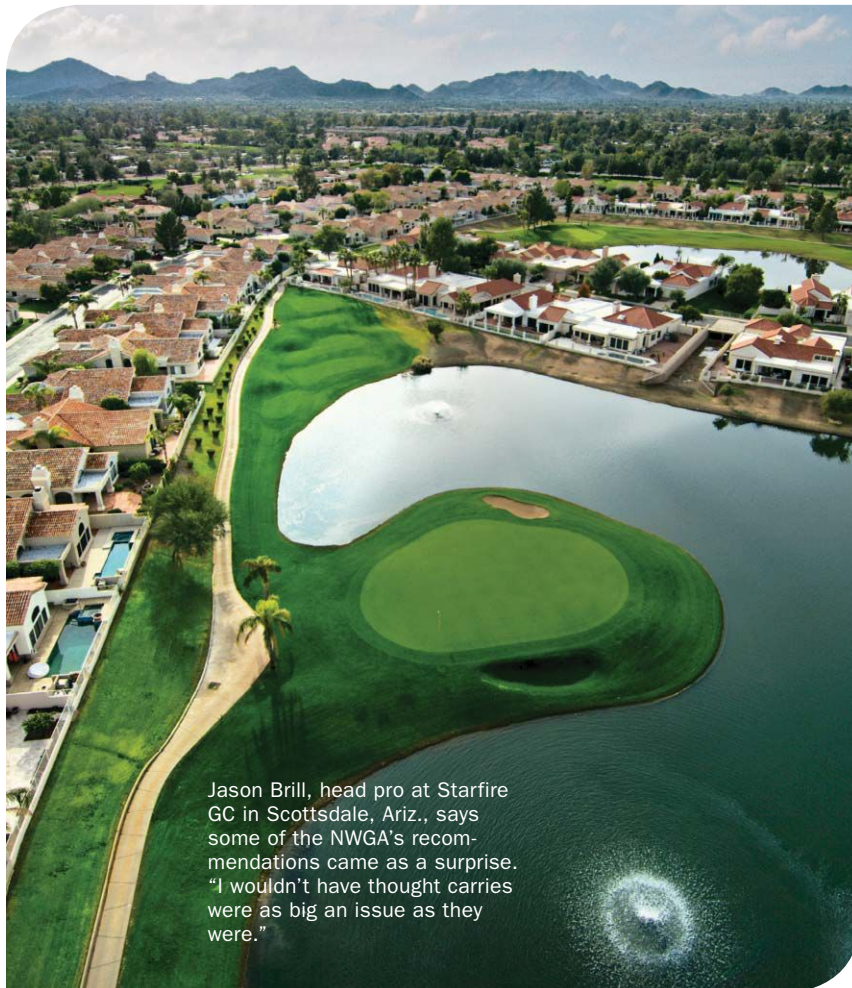
Rodney Green

Rodney Green, Innisbrook's director of golf. "The female golfer has always been an important market for us. It's an honor to receive this certification and we enjoy striving to be a leader in golf in this regard and others."

Starfire Golf Club in Scottsdale, Ariz., was the first golf facility to go through the NWGA certification process. Head Golf Professional Jason Brill says Starfire valued its first report from the NWGA and implemented the recommended changes immediately. The clubhouse's Scottsdale Grill tweaked its menu to add more salads and light granola bars. In the golf shop, rental clubs for ladies—right-handed and left-handed sets—were added. As for the on-course bathrooms, fans were changed out and mirrors were framed in as part of making the overall appearance of the restrooms cleaner and more presentable. Plans also are in the works to convert a par 3 hole to a par 4 for the addition of drop areas for ladies and for the construction of two new tee boxes.

"The ladies rental clubs, that really surprised me. It's something I wouldn't think of, and how important the outside bathrooms are on the course. I also wouldn't have thought the carries were as big an issue as they were," Brill says. Since working with the NWGA evaluators, Brill says, the needs of the woman player are now

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Jason Brill, head pro at Starfire GC in Scottsdale, Ariz., says some of the NWGA's recommendations came as a surprise. "I wouldn't have thought carries were as big an issue as they were."

PHOTO COURTESY: STARFIRE GC